

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-06 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 L-02

/036 W

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R 241010Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2275

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 1629

BEIRUT FOR DWOR.

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CIVAIR, TC, SY, US

SUBJ: SYRIAN AIRLINE PURCHASE

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH UAE AMBASSADOR TO LONDON AND PARIS MAHDI TAJIR IN DUBAI NOV 20, I ASKED HIM (KNOWING HE HAD ACCOMPANIED SHAIKH ZAYID ON LATTER'S RECENT VISIT TO DAMASCUS) WHAT LATEST WORD WAS ON SYRIAN DECISION TO PURCHASE CIVIL AIRCRAFT.

2. TAJIR SAID THAT EUROPEANS, ESPECIALLY FRENCH, WERE DOING THEIR BEST THWART HIS EFFORT TO SELL AMERICAN AIRCRAFT IN DAMASCUS AND TO DISCREDIT HIM PERSONALLY WITH SHAIKH ZAYID. TAJIR HAD RECENTLY BEEN CALLED IN BY FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER AND TOLD BLUNTLY THAT GOF BELIEVED HE PERSONALLY WAS BLOCKING SALE OF FRENCH AIRCRAFT TO SYRIANS. FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER SAID, ACCORDING TO TAJIR, THAT THIS DID NOT COMPORT WITH HIS MISSION AS AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE, WHICH WAS TO SEEK WAYS OF IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN HIS GOVERNMENT AND GOF. TAJIR SAID HE REACTED COLDLY TO THIS FRENCH SUMMONS.

3. TAJIR SAID WHEN HE GOT TO DAMASCUS, HE FOUND SYRIAN SUPPORTERS
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OF AIR BUS GLEEFULLY REPORTING TO HIM THAT BOTH SYRIAN AND

FRENCH EMBASSIES HAD NOW MADE IT CLEAR ABU DHABI FINANCING WOULD BE AVAILABLE REGARDLESS OF WHICH AIRCRAFT SYRIANS CHOSE TO BUY. THEY REPORTEDLY TOLD TAJIR THEY HOPED HE WOULD BE GOOD LOSER AND NOT GET ANGRY. TAJIR REPLIED HE WAS INDEED NOT ANGRY, BUT IF SYRIANS THOUGHT THEY COULD GET ABU DHABI MONEY FOR AIR BUS THEY WERE WELCOME TO TRY AND TAJIR WOULD TAKE BETS FROM ANYONE THAT HE WOULD SUCCEED IN PREVENTING IT.

4. TAJIR SAID SYRIANS IN FACT HAVE PROBABLY DECIDED AGAINST BOTH TRISTAR AND AIR BUS. TAJIR BELIEVED SARG WAS CLOSE TO DECISION TO BUY BOEINGS, WHICH TAJIR SAID WERE CHEAPER AND ON WHOLE PROBABLY BETTER SUITED TO SYRIAN NEEDS. HE SAID PURCHASE WOULD PROBABLY BE THREE BOEING 727-300'S AND TWO SHORT 747'S WHICH WOULD BE CONFIGURED IN HALF-PASSENGER AND HALF-CARGO MODE.

5. COMMENT: MAKING USUAL FIFTY PERCENT DISCOUNT FOR SELF-SERVING STATEMENTS AND BRAVADO IN TAJIR'S ACCOUNT, FRENCH SEEM NOT TO BE HITTING IT OFF WITH HIM TO SAY THE LEAST. ADDRESSEES PLEASE HOLD TAJIR'S COMMENTS TO THEMSELVES; WE WOULD PARTICULARLY NOT WISH THEM TO BE REPEATED TO ANY OF THE US COMPANY REPS.

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